



WASHINGTON BUREAU

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

1156 15TH STREET, N.W. • SUITE 915 • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005 • Phone (202) 463-2940
Fax (202) 463-2953 • E-Mail: washingtonbureau@naacpnet.org • Web Address: www.naacp.org

Acting Chairman Michael Copps
Commissioners Jonathan Adelstein
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 09-51

June 5, 2009

Dear FCC Acting Chairman and Commissioners:

On behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), our nation's oldest, largest and most widely recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization with over 2,200 membership units in every state in our union, I urge the FCC to develop a national broadband plan as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that will extend the benefits of broadband to all Americans.

While many Americans have brought a broadband connection into their homes, it is still out of reach for too many American families. An article in *BusinessWeek* revealed that among households making \$50,000 or less per year – about half of the country – only 35% have broadband service. The FCC must consider lowering barriers that are standing in the way of universal broadband deployment and adoption.

Private sector investment has led an incredible drive to wire over 90% of the country with broadband, putting hi-speed technology at the fingertips of so many people. However, we all understand that more work needs to be done. The FCC should encourage the U.S. Congress to develop and fund policy initiatives to deliver broadband technology to those who currently do not have access and to address concerns over a lack of adoption. The FCC should consider the impact public-private partnerships can have to ensure that un-served urban and rural communities have access to broadband programs. We encourage the FCC to work with anchor institutions such as public schools, community centers, community based organizations and local libraries that can prove effective in teaching local residents about new technologies. The NAACP strongly believes that communities and individuals reluctant to bring broadband into their homes can benefit with education programs borne from public-private partnerships within local neighborhoods.

Above all, the FCC's plan should clearly advance efforts to bring broadband to those populations where it is currently unavailable and to those populations where it is available but the adoption rates remain low to populations where broadband is already widely available and private investment continues to drive the expansion of new network capabilities.

The benefits of broadband are clearly valued by its users. Broadband creates opportunities for economic advancement, civic engagement, access to emergency services and community resources. A joint study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project and the University of Illinois found that nearly three in five adults use the Internet to find professional advisors like doctors, lawyers and financial experts. Nearly four in five Internet users visit government websites to find crucial information and assistance to become more civic-minded.

Broadband is also closely linked to job creation and business development in the communities in which it is deployed. According to a study by the Brookings Institution, for every one percentage point increase in broadband penetration in a state, employment can increase 0.2 to 0.3 percent per year. An Empiris study shows that half of all new American jobs in 2008 came from the broadband/IT sectors. Additionally, broadband spending, particularly in the private sector, means more opportunities for minority contractors and suppliers to hire workers, a key focus and goal of our advocacy in the corporate community.

The NAACP urges the FCC to adopt a national broadband plan which ensures that all Americans can have high quality, affordable and sustainable access to broadband technologies. It will lead to job creation and economic development in additional communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on this issue. If there is anything I can do to further advance the NAACP's position on this or other issues, I can be contacted at (202) 463-2940.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hilary O. Shelton', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Hilary O. Shelton
Vice President for Advocacy and
Director, Washington Bureau